

Week 4—Numbers 12

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

Day 1

1. Read Numbers 12:1-2. What was the pretext for Miriam and Aaron's complaint against Moses' leadership? Do you think this is the real issue, or is there something deeper going on here? How have you seen this in your own life?

Miriam and Aaron—Notice that Miriam's name is listed first, and the Hebrew verb used at the beginning of Numbers 12 is feminine, which are both clues that she was the chief instigator of this sin.

A Cushite—Nowhere in the Law does it say Moses could not marry a Cushite woman. This suggests this issue was perhaps an issue of conscience, or simply an excuse for the deeper issue of envy in their hearts.

2. Read v. 1 carefully: Do Miriam and Aaron talk to Moses? If not, what do they do? What does this create? According to Matthew 18:15, what should they have done? Is this your normal approach? Why or why not?

3. How would you define envy? Where do you notice it crop up in your life? How does our culture push us towards it? Do you consider it a serious sin? Why or why not?

Day 2

1. Read Numbers 12:3. Most scholars believe this verse was added later to the text to describe Moses (otherwise, how humble would it be for Moses to write this about himself?!). Why do you think it was added at this particular place?

2. How would you define humility or meekness? Read the note below. Do we have the same view of meekness in our country as the note suggests? Why or why not? How does Moses' example encourage you as you consider this? What do Matthew 11:29 and Philippians 2:8 say about Jesus & humility/meekness? What does this tell you?

Humility/Meekness— LeFebvre notes, “In traditional honor-shame societies, meekness is regarded as a sign of weakness. According to customary principles of honor and shame, when a leader’s honor is challenged, he must defend his honor or risk losing it to the challenger. Honor is viewed as a commodity to be either defended or lost. However, Moses embodies a different model of leadership that establishes a different standard for God’s people (12:3). Moses does not seek to preserve his own glory but humbly leaves his reputation in God’s hands.”

3. What is God’s view of humility and meekness? What do the following verses say about it?

Psalm 18:27—

Psalm 149:4—

Matthew 5:5—

Matthew 23:12—

Mark 15:5—

James 4:10—

1 Peter 5:5-6—

What does the LORD want to teach you about humility/meekness today? How can you grow in this?

Day 3

1. Read Numbers 12:4-8 and take notes of what stands out to you. Why do you think the LORD responds, “at once” (v. 4), to Miriam and Aaron’s envy?

2. What does the Lord identify as unique in His relationship with Moses? How does God say He speaks to Moses? How is this different from any other prophet? How does God speak to us today? Do you take the time in your life to listen to His voice?

3 How does this section foreshadow the uniqueness of Christ? Hebrews 3:1-6 quotes from this passage; read it and consider: If there is a difference between Moses and other prophets, what is the difference between Jesus and even Moses as described in those verses? Make notes below what you see *then* read the note below.

Faithful in all my house—The description “faithful in all God’s house” identifies Moses as more than a prophet—he is also steward in God’s house. But “Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses” (Heb. 3:3). Moses was an exalted *steward* in God’s house, “but Christ is faithful *over* God’s house as a son” (Heb. 3:6). Once again, God’s Story always points to Jesus.

What do these verses in Hebrews 3 tell us about Jesus? What does that mean for us?

Day 4

1. Read Numbers 12:9-13. Why did the LORD need to punish Miriam in this way? What does this teach us about speaking against the leaders God has appointed? Does this mean leaders should never be questioned? If not, then what is the lesson here?

2. What do you notice about Moses in these verses? How does this back up what has already been said about Him? Would this have been your response? Why or why not?

3. Before you read the note below, why do you think God choose leprosy as Miriam's punishment? What did she need to learn? Does God discipline us for our sin (see Hebrews 12:11)? Why? What can His discipline teach us?

Leprosy—Miriam sinned openly, and the results of that rebellion would be equally public. Lepers were utterly shunned by the people and were forced to live outside the camp in a place of dishonor. Leprosy, like the sin of complaining, was contagious.

Day 5

1. Read Numbers 12:14-16. Where do we see God's grace extended to Miriam in these verses? How is this similar to when He disciplines us? Can you name a time in your life when you have experienced this?

Spit in her face—If a father spat in the face of his daughter or son, it would indicate that she had somehow disgraced the family name. The Lord was saying that Miriam's rebellious spirit was a disgrace to the name of God.

2. Notice v. 16 again and read the note below. Do you think the people are ready to enter the Promised Land? Why or why not? How can we make sure we are prepared as we journey toward our home in Heaven?

Desert of Paran— This is the southernmost region of the promised land, and the people’s opportunity to conquer the land was soon to come.

3. What personal lessons have you learned from Numbers 12 this week? How can you look to Jesus to help you as you seek to apply them?

Conclusion

1. What most stood out to you as you studied Numbers 12 this week? *Why* do you think this was the case?

2. What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to *do* as a result of this? Be prepared to share with your group!